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# Decolonizing Civil War

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Patricia Owens\*

## Abstract

This essay argues that there is a need to decolonize the genealogy of civil war. David Armitage's new book brilliantly reveals civil war's generative power in shaping European and North American conceptions of politics, revolution, and the laws of war. But to make sense of the discourse of civil war we also need to account for the constitutive exclusions of those whose struggles elite Europeans refused to recognize as "civil," those not recognized as part of a common brotherhood or as co-belligerents. The absence/presence of women, slaves, and barbarous armies is vital to the historical conception of civil war.

## I. Introduction

The concept of "civil war" is rooted in ancient Roman practices of citizenship. *Bellum civile* was fought among fellow citizens, those recognized as part of a common brotherhood, expressed in citizenship. Without this legal and political status, without recognition of others as citizens, there could be no civil war. The event that demanded a new name occurred in 88 B.C.E., when the consul Lucius Cornelius Sulla led an army into the city, treating Roman citizens like foreign enemies. Later, in 49 B.C.E., Julius Caesar took his army across the Rubicon, the river boundary between Gaul and Rome. "Breaching the strict separation between military and civilian command," writes intellectual historian David Armitage, "the act brought the zone of war . . . within the peaceful sphere of the commonwealth" (62).<sup>1</sup> *Bellum civile* was distinguished from wars among allies (*bellum sociale*, from *socii*, allies). They were also distinguished from wars against slaves, most famously the three Servile Wars of the late Roman Republic (from *servi* for slaves). Notwithstanding the frequency of wars between former allies and organized slave revolts, talk of "social wars" and "servile wars" has not endured. Despite the particularity and specificity of its origins and the other powerful and comparable traditions of *stasis* (Greek), *fitna* (Islamic), and "internal war" (Chinese), the Roman discourse of *bellum civile* has been translated into almost every major European language, and shapes contemporary discourses of international relations and international law.

In his latest book, *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (2016), Armitage points to the lack of sustained comparative analysis of Greek, Roman, Islamic, and Chinese traditions of thinking about violence within polities. More surprising perhaps is the neglect of civil war as a subject of sophisticated theoretical reflection in Eurocentric political thought: "civil war has remained undertheorized and resistant to generalization," even among political

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<sup>1</sup> David Armitage, *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (2016).

philosophers. “There is no great work titled *On Civil War* to stand alongside Carl von Clausewitz’s *On War* or Hannah Arendt’s *On Revolution*” (7). The apparent absence of deep philosophical yet historically informed reflection on “civil war” also bothered Michel Foucault and, more recently, Giorgio Agamben. In his 1972-73 lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault claimed that civil war was too often conceived of as “the accident, the abnormality . . . the theoretical-practical monstrosity.”<sup>2</sup> In *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm* (2015), Agamben observed that there is “both a ‘polemology,’ a theory of war, and an ‘irenology,’ a theory of peace, but there is no ‘stasiology,’ no theory of civil war.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, Armitage convincingly shows that the Roman concept of civil war is not, *pace* Agamben, interchangeable with the Greek concept of *stasis*.<sup>4</sup> *Stasis* was “a state of mind rather than an act of physical resistance,” Armitage writes. “It might lead to war, or even arise from war, but it did not in itself entail actual warfare” (38). Nonetheless, Agamben’s polemical point holds. There is no shortage of writing on particular historical and contemporary cases of civil wars. But the post-Cold War proliferation of social scientific and other studies of violent disorder could lead “only to a doctrine of management, that is, of the administration, manipulation and internationalisation of internal conflicts.” Such work is “geared not toward an interpretation of the phenomenon, but . . . toward the conditions under which an international intervention becomes possible.”<sup>5</sup>

We should not expect from social science more than it was established to do.<sup>6</sup> Neither a social scientist nor a political philosopher, David Armitage is a world-leading historian of political and international thought. His distinctive and invaluable purpose “is to uncover,” at the level of historical, political, legal, and social scientific ideas in context, “the origins of our present discontents, to explain just why we remain so confused about civil war and why we refuse to look it in the face” (7). In contrast to those who depict civil war’s fraternal violence as foundational, primal, or irrational, Armitage reads civil war as “neither eternal nor inexplicable. . . . [T]he phenomenon is coterminous with its historical conception” (11). With no stable identity, civil war cannot be defined. It is nonetheless possible to examine how its multiple meanings from the past, particularly from Rome through early modern Europe to the Age of Revolution and the American Civil War, shape our current conceptions “about its genesis, about its normative definition, about how to recognize its outward signs, and about the likelihood of its recurrence” (25). Like war in general, civil war is “conceptually generative” (12). In his powerful and well-written genealogy, Armitage convincingly demonstrates the significance of “civil war” to European and North American conceptions of politics, democracy, revolution and much else.

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Punitive Society: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1972-1973*, 215 (Arnold I. Davidson ed., Graham Burchell trans., 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm* 1 (Nicholas Heron trans., 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Id. at 2, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Patricia Owens, *Economy of Force: Counterinsurgency and the Historical Rise of the Social* chs. 2-4 (2015).

That which has been named civil war, like all violence, is historically contingent and irreducibly political. Discourses of civil war, the notion of a “global civil war,” Armitage claims, “reveal a great deal about the way we define our communities, how we identify our enemies, and how we encourage our allies” (233).

These are vital arguments. In this short paper, I ask whether Armitage’s impressively wide-ranging analysis has fully captured the historical conception of civil war. Class, civilizational and gendered hierarchies were foundational to the very concept. Hence to fully understand civil war’s generative powers, we must also account for the constitutive exclusions and inclusions of those whose struggles elite Europeans refused to recognize as “civil,” those who were not part of the common brotherhood, co-belligerents or eligible for “civilian” protection. The claim is not that Armitage has entirely ignored these issues. He points to Cicero’s “hierarchy of enemies and challenges; most opprobrious of all were the pirates and slaves” (66). He suggests that “the treatment of non-European peoples” was “a toxic by-product” of the attempt to “civilize” civil war, “opening up a gap between those who were to be dealt with humanely and those who were not, the latter not even considered human” (171). Still the fundamentally gendered, raced, and classed genealogy of civil war is underestimated in *Civil Wars*. These hierarchies are not marginal or secondary issues. They reveal the very many constitutive “others” to war between citizen-brothers and thus they are central, not peripheral, to the genealogy of civil war. I intend these comments as a friendly provocation to David Armitage, a scholar whom I greatly admire and am intellectually indebted to,<sup>7</sup> and whom I am unashamedly holding to standards that I myself do not always meet.

The remainder of this essay is divided into three parts. The first section examines what Armitage suggests is especially wrenching about civil war, that it is akin to intimate, domestic violence, war between brothers. Are there problems with this sanctification of fraternal violence when all war is hell and other forms of violence by politically organized bands of brothers exact cumulatively more violence on those without the honor of citizenship? The second part considers Armitage’s extremely bold attempt to overthrow the conceptual distinction between civil war and revolution, which emerged during the Age of Revolution in the late eighteenth century. What are the implications when the Haitian rather than the French or the American Revolution is our paradigmatic case? The third part examines the role of discourses of civilizational difference in attempts to “civilize” military conduct during the American Civil War. That civil war is fratricide, among brothers, between men, is obviously gendered. “Brothers” is also code for a racialized and civilizational identity, as evidenced by the conceptualization of the “barbarous armies” of Native Americans that was intrinsic to the so-called “civilizing” of civil war in the settler colony. The essay concludes that there is a need to decolonize the genealogy of civil war to challenge the way in which the deeply embedded hierarchies of European historiography continue to shape intellectual production.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., David Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (2013).

<sup>8</sup> For a good model, see Tarak Barkawi, *Decolonizing War*, 1 *Eur. J. Int’l Security* 199 (2016).

## II. Sanctifying Fraternal Violence

One of the most significant and recurrent discourses surrounding civil war is that it is more emotionally wrenching than wars fought against foreign enemies. This discourse, which Armitage both shows is foundational to the concept of civil war and also adopts, centers on fratricidal animosity. What could be worse than mutual fratricide, the reciprocal killing and maiming of brothers for political ends? Since its inception, enemies in civil war could be “all too familiar and could even be thought of as familial” (33). With Rome’s founding myth of Romulus murdering Remus, “fratricide,” Armitage writes, “would become the central metaphor of the unnatural dissension at the heart of civil war” (46). Even when long-held distinctions between civil and foreign wars broke down, observers expanded their understanding of brotherhood, as well as war. As Victor Hugo asked in the nineteenth century, “Is not every war between men, between brothers?” For Voltaire, “all battles are battles between fellow-citizens, nay more, between brothers” (quoted on 198). Since the middle of the twentieth century, the idea of “global civil war” discussed by thinkers such as Schmidt, Arendt, Agamben, Hardt and Negri, “carries with it, additionally, an idea of universal humanity affirmed by discerning conflict within a single capacious community . . . an intensification of long-standing, originally Roman ideas of civil war that were later broadened and intensified by cosmopolitanism’s expansion of empathy” (230).

For Armitage, the American Revolutionary War is paradigmatic of when civil war is “uniquely wrenching” when “it is fought against domestic kindred rather than identifiably foreign enemies” (136). That settler colonists wished to secede from the British Crown was a struggle between “intimate enemies.” “The idea of the transatlantic conflict as a ‘social war,’” between former allies, suggested that American colonists “differed from those in metropolitan Britain in their status and their rights” (139). They were allies to the British but not quite the same, “or as the Romans would have said, *socii*, but not equal citizens.” In contrast, writes Armitage, the “language of civil war implied a much closer kinship among all parties, as well as the existence of a common polity, of which all were fellow members. That polity was the British Atlantic empire” (140). In the “congenital strife” of civil war, fraternity is at stake and hence more destructive and emotionally wrenching (119). And yet, for these very same reasons, Armitage suggests, the “unnatural dissension” at the core of civil war discloses, paradoxically, a shared humanity. A Briton living and working in the United States, Armitage counsels that “we should not underestimate the effect of civil wars in forcing a recognition of commonality amid confrontation, of making us see ourselves in the mirror of enmity” (12). But which vectors of hierarchy and power underpin recognition of common humanity in the face of civil war’s horror? The seemingly indisputable claim that civil war is more destructive and emotionally wrenching is not descriptive but irreducibly partisan.

When Sulla led an army into the capital city and, some years later, Caesar crossed the Rubicon, elite Romans experienced something new, the breaching of their civil-military distinctions and locations of war. “Perhaps having been first to define what was ‘civil’—meaning, among fellow citizens—they inevitably understood their most wrench-

ing conflicts in definitively political terms, as clashes among citizens that rose to the level of war” (32). But theirs is a wholly partial account of the multiple forms of violence at play that maintain the distinctions between civilian and military, domestic and foreign. In the familial discourse of civil war, some forms of “struggle against intimate enemies” are named and elevated, others obscured. Civil war is a war between brothers, with the relevant “domestic kindred” gendered male. This is who is seen in the “mirror of enmity.”<sup>9</sup> Civil war can only be conceived as worse than other forms of foreign and domestic-intimate killing because there is a hierarchy of violence, killing and mourning in which some horrors are not seen. If the horror of civil war is that the dissension between brothers was “unnatural,” then what is natural killing in the discourse of civil war? Put to one side the (unnatural) work required to produce soldiers willing and able to kill “foreigners.” The (natural?) solidarity among these brothers/citizens is required to ensure the violent subordination of women and slaves. Yet the violence by and against slaves and women is constitutively excluded from civil war.<sup>10</sup> In the gendered Eurocentric history of civil-military relations, the actions of Sulla and Caesar were, indeed, momentous. But this framing, the notion of a “peaceful sphere” within the commonwealth, risks normalizing the highly organized and cumulatively large-scale violence necessary to subordinate non-citizens, non-brothers, in that very domain.

### III. White Civil War, Black Revolution

Between 140 B.C.E. and 70 B.C.E., Rome fought three unprecedented major wars against armies of escaped slaves. Two were fought in Sicily. The third and most well-known threatened the city of Rome itself. Led by the Thracian gladiator Spartacus, the so-called Third Servile War (73-71 B.C.E.) ravaged large tracts of Roman land. The slave army of over 100,000 fighters was only defeated after thousands were killed; the majority of surviving slaves were crucified for their “rebellion.” Had the rebels defeated the forces of the Roman Republic, the Third Servile War might now (albeit anachronistically) be referred to as the Spartacist Revolution, or perhaps even less authentically and plausibly one of Rome’s many civil wars. What, historically and politically, is at stake in the distinction between revolution and civil war? David Armitage has written a good-natured polemic against what he views as Western political thought’s absorption with “revolution.” To elevate the intellectual standing of civil war requires undercutting the hegemony of revolution and those self-styled “progressive” and “future” oriented revolutionaries.

<sup>9</sup> In historical and artistic representations of Caesar crossing the Rubicon, women appear as either monster or whore, marking the significance of the threshold, as either somehow responsible for or warning against what was to come. As Armitage reports, historian Suetonius “adds to the scene an enthralling and mysterious pipe-playing woman who snatches a trumpet from one of Caesar’s men and, leaping across the river, summons the army from another bank. Lucan also places a woman at the scene, a grief-stricken, disheveled embodiment of Rome herself” (63).

<sup>10</sup> This is clearest in how *polemos* is differentiated from *stasis*. War, *polemos*, was large-scale armed conflict with foreigners. “Faction, or *stasis*, took place within the *polis* between sharply divided groups without such formal military arrays and often wielding little more than what came to hand.” We know this violence is only *stasis*, not *polemos*, because it is women’s hands hurling “roof tiles” at “oligarchs” (43).

Armitage's singular example of civil war masquerading as revolution is France, 1789. Only through a process of forgetting or caricaturing civil war as backward and regressive, could successful civil wars be so repackaged. Perhaps the book's boldest claim is that in the eighteenth-century, "civil war was the genus of which revolution was only the species" (158). But a successful slave revolt would undermine Armitage's central claim: that the "revolutionary script" is really just a "palimpsest—underneath the new version, still very much visible, was the one transmitted by the historians of Rome's civil wars" (124).

There was no Spartacist Revolution in Rome. But the revolution that began in Haiti in 1791 led by the "Black Spartacus" Toussaint L'Ouverture culminated in an event that cannot be reduced to the genealogy of civil war.<sup>11</sup> It would be easy enough to describe aspects of the conflicts in late-eighteenth-century Haiti as resembling some version of "civil war." But, if we are to adopt Roman categories at all, then Haitians were engaged in a servile war with revolutionary intent, a form of armed struggle that precedes that of civil war and only against which "civil" wars, as wars between "free," non-slave citizens, could be defined. Whether we adopt or reject Roman categories, there was a revolution in Haiti and its script was no palimpsest. Of course, Armitage did not set out to write a book on servile wars and is thus not centrally concerned with armed slave rebellion.<sup>12</sup> But the one in Haiti led to a revolution. More importantly, there could be no historical conception of civil war, as transmitted from Rome to early modern Europe and the white Atlantic, without an associated conception of servile war. Armitage has decisively shown the enduring influence of Roman discourses of civil war on European and North American thought. But my sense is that we lack what is more urgently needed, an historical and political account of how and why the lexicon of civil war dominated at the expense of the discourses of those struggling against those who would name themselves citizens while withholding such recognition from those that they exploit.

If we take Haiti, rather than France or the United States, as our paradigmatic revolution then there are far stronger grounds for keeping civil war and revolution conceptually distinct. The experience of revolution, to extend Armitage's point about civil war, "is coterminous with its historical conception" (11). "Historically," as Hannah Arendt observed, "wars are among the oldest phenomenon of the recorded past while revolutions, properly speaking, did not exist prior to the modern age; they are among the most recent of all major political data."<sup>13</sup> Both Armitage and Agamben cast Arendt as the high priestess of revolution, partly responsible for civil war's second-class status in political thought.<sup>14</sup> I doubt this. Arendt's greatest political and intellectual failure was her inability to recognize slaves and the descendants of slaves as revolutionary subjects, omit-

<sup>11</sup> Robbie Shilliam, *Race and Revolution at Bwa Kayiman*, 45 *Millennium: J. Int'l Stud.* 269 (2017).

<sup>12</sup> But see *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840* (David Armitage & Sanjay Subrahmanyam eds., 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* 2 (2016) (1963).

<sup>14</sup> Agamben, *supra* note 3, at 2-3; Armitage, *supra* note 1, at 123.

ting Haiti from *On Revolution*.<sup>15</sup> But her writings illustrate that one does *not* need to adopt a caricature of civil war as backward and regressive to conceive of revolution as something distinct, even while acknowledging that one practice may lead to the other. Contra Armitage, Arendt did not dismiss civil war, “along with war itself, as atavistic and anti-modern” (7). Her writings on war, which span over four decades, were far more nuanced and sophisticated.<sup>16</sup> She did maintain, with some justification in my view, a distinction between revolution and civil war, a product of her more fundamental and still valuable and surprisingly neglected distinction between the phenomena of politics and war. The epigraph for *Civil Wars* is taken from *On Revolution*: “whatever brotherhood human beings may be capable of has grown out of fratricide, whatever political organization men have achieved has its origin in crime.”<sup>17</sup> This appears to be Armitage’s view. Arendt wrote these words in the context of her *critique* of these sentiments, the common conflation of wars of liberation and revolution. Like all war, civil war is reciprocal violence. It may or may not lead to the conditions under which a revolution may take place. The moment of revolution itself is not necessarily, or even essentially, violent. It is the establishment of a political space of public freedom in which people debate and act on what is common to them. Not every form of political organization originated in fratricide or crime.

Ultimately, Armitage’s assimilation of revolution to civil war is underpinned by his very particular and somewhat surprising definition of politics. Consider his explanation for why, despite modern prejudices in favor of revolution, it has never been possible to “de-throne civil war from the repertoire of political thought.” In one of the most startling claims of the book, Armitage suggests that it is “only because politics itself was always a form of civil war by other, less deadly means” (237-38). Politics itself “was always a form a civil war.” What is the basis for this claim? Armitage has convincingly shown that there is an irreducibly “political” character to the discourse of civil war. But this is not the same as showing that politics *is* civil war with less violence. With Schmitt and Foucault, Armitage’s “politics” is just *defined* as a form of human activity on a continuum with war, only varying in degrees of violence. This may be why the epigraph for *Civil Wars* is about brotherhood, fratricide, political organization, and crime. But there is no basis for this conception other than adherence to founding myths about civil war, to Clausewitz’s dictum that war is the continuation of politics by violent means, and those like Foucault, Deleuze and others who simply reverse Clausewitz’s formula for polemical effect. David Armitage openly acknowledges that his bold claim on behalf of civil war comes with a political risk: “that looking for the civil war at the heart of any revolution is downright *counterrevolutionary*” (149-50). That could be a view from Haiti. We could extend this to his conception of politics as well.

<sup>15</sup> The literature on Arendt’s failures in this regard, her racism, is extensive. For a summary and analysis of this literature, and a self-critique, see Patricia Owens, *Racism in the Theory Canon: Hannah Arendt and “the one Great Crime in which America was Never Involved,”* 45 *Millennium: J. Int’l Stud.* 403 (2017).

<sup>16</sup> For a book-length treatment see Patricia Owens, *Between War and Politics: International Relations and the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (2007).

<sup>17</sup> Arendt, *supra* note 13, at 10-11.



#### IV. Civil Warriors and Barbarous Armies

Through relentless westward and then overseas expansion, American revolutionaries formed their own imperial domain. Hence, as Armitage writes, they succeeded in “transforming struggles within” the British empire “to a conflict outside it” (142). In contrast, Haitians were never able to transform their struggle within the French empire to one fully recognized as being outside the neo-colonial relation. The same can be said of Native Americans coerced by white European settlers into partially “sovereign” nations on smaller and smaller tracks of land. The “American Indian Wars” were not civil wars or servile wars, nor were they wars against foreigners exactly; Indians were on their own land. As far as I am aware, they were never referred to as social wars, despite the shifting alliances between settlers and Native American bands, tribes, and nations. This organized, large-scale reciprocal violence was settler colonial war, and it occurred before, during, and after the American Civil War (1861-65). This “civil” conflict between American “brothers” produced the first sustained and successful attempt to give legal meaning to “civil war” in the form of instructions for Union armies circulated as *General Orders No. 100*. This effort to “civilize” civil war is better known as the Lieber Code after its author, Francis Lieber (1798-1872) the Prussian-born first American professor of political science. What happens to the genealogy of war between citizen-brothers when the constitutive “other” is not a slave or foreigner but, to use Lieber’s own words from the Code, the “barbarous armies” of “uncivilized peoples”?<sup>18</sup>

Armitage’s book was partly inspired by discovering Lieber’s papers at the Huntington Library when he was working on something else. This was in late 2006, a time when three thousand people were being killed every month in Iraq. Lieber’s Code provided the groundwork for the modern laws of war, shaped the Geneva and Hague Conventions, and has been reissued in response to crises sparked by overseas imperial occupations, such as turn of the twentieth-century Philippines and twenty-first century Afghanistan and Iraq. Among other regulations related to martial law, military jurisdiction and prisoners of war, *General Orders No. 100* codified some protections for some civilians in some circumstances during armed conflict internal to the United States. To distinguish civil war from “insurrection” and “rebellion,” Lieber offered a two-part definition. The first, fighting between armed groups claiming to represent the legitimate government seeking “mastery” of the territorial whole, Armitage traces to Rome. The second, unprecedented part is large-scale armed rebellion on territory “contiguous to those containing the seat of government,” but not necessarily claiming mastery of the whole territory (188). As International Relations scholar Helen M. Kinsella has pointed out, “The debate over the exact relationship of the Confederacy to the Union,” a subject that Armitage discusses at length, “was, in many ways, not dissimilar to the debate over the relations of the Indians to the United States.” “Were each . . . independent sovereign entities,” Kinsella

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<sup>18</sup> Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field, prepared by Francis Lieber, LL.D., Originally Issued as General Orders No. 100, Adjutant General’s Office, 1863, Washington 1898: Government Printing Office, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/lieber.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lieber.asp).

continues, “with legitimate governance, engaged in sovereign wars? Or were they simply insurrectionists with no corresponding rights or recognition as belligerents.”<sup>19</sup> The debate about civilizing civil war was also, at the same time and inextricably linked to, war against “uncivilized peoples.”

Both Native Americans and the Confederacy were engaged in significant armed conflict, contesting the extent of the sovereignty of the United States. The Union recognized both Native Americans and Confederates as possessing semi-sovereign legal status and as belligerents to an armed conflict.<sup>20</sup> Yet as a filial war between (civilized) descendants of Europeans, Union soldiers could afford some protection to “inoffensive civilians” and surrendering Confederate soldiers, but not Native Americans. Lieber’s claim of what was lawful military conduct against the Confederacy was wholly defined in relation to the conduct expected from Indian tribes and, in turn, Union soldiers, fighting them. “In modern regular wars of the Europeans, and their descendants in other portions of the globe,” states Article 25 of the Code, “protection of the inoffensive citizen of the hostile country is the rule; privation and disturbance of private relations are the exceptions.” Civilized nations and civilized soldiers do their utmost to spare the life and dignity of unarmed civilians. “Protection was, and still is with uncivilized people, the exception” (art. 24). That the war against the Confederacy ought, where possible, to be a civilized war was central to the legal and political debates about recognition and appropriate conduct. But, as Kinsella has put it, “the permissibility of particular actions had more to do with upholding the honor of and difference of the white settlers than it did with treating the Indians as honourable foes, equal belligerents, or fellow humans.”<sup>21</sup> As noted in the Introduction, for Armitage “the treatment of non-European peoples” was “a toxic by-product” of the attempt to “civilize” civil war, “opening up a gap between those who were to be dealt with humanely and those who were not” (171). Those constitutively excluded from civilizing attempts potentially reveal something more fundamental than an incidental, secondary effect. The degenerate treatment of Native Americans by the first “civilizers” of civil war was the precondition of mutual recognition of those brothers descended from Europe.

## V. Conclusion

David Armitage has produced a brilliant book. This short engagement has not at all done justice to its very many excellent qualities. Instead, it has focused on one of its few flaws. I have tried to suggest that the absence/presence of women, slaves, and barbarous armies is vital to the historical concept of civil war, but is underestimated in *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas*. The notion that civil war is more wrenching because of the unnatural reciprocal kill-

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<sup>19</sup> Helen M. Kinsella, *The Image Before the Weapon: A Critical History of the Distinction Between Combatant and Civilian* 85 (2011).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* at 94-95.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 97.

ing of brothers is partisan not just descriptive. The sharp distinction between revolution and civil war may hold for late eighteenth-century America and France. But a successful army of former slaves led a revolution in Haiti that cannot be understood through a genealogy of civil war descended from Rome. The case also raises questions about how and why we privilege an historical understanding of civil war over the armed struggles of those constitutively excluded from citizenship. Finally, degenerate war against “uncivilized peoples” was inextricably linked to the debate about civilizing civil war. The intellectual challenge to all those interested in the historical discourse of civil war is to place within a common historical and political frame those elite would-be descendants of Roman citizens, as brilliantly accounted for by Armitage, and those whose struggles could not be conceived of as “civil.” Such an account would surely not be supplementary to civil war’s history in ideas. It would be the genealogy of civil war.